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U. S. Department of Agriculture

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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "CAKE QUESTIONS." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics,
U. S. Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

Listeners, are the June brides setting their weddings late this year? Or how does it happen that the usual letters about making wedding cakes are only just coming in? But they are coming--letters from the brides themselves and also from their sisters and their cousins and their aunts who are in charge of the cakes for the occasion and want to know all about mixing, baking, icing, decorating, serving and what not.

No wonder wedding cakes call forth questions. Of all the cakes baked the world over, they have the most history and tradition behind them. From very early times almost every nation has been baking wedding cakes. Early Roman brides had a round cake of salted meal and served a piece to every guest. Even some American Indian tribes had wedding cakes of cornmeal which the bride presented to the groom. Today in Moravia the bridesmaids carry the great iced wedding cake on their shoulders to the church to be blessed by the priest before the marriage. In parts of Greece the wedding cake containing a ring and coins takes days to make and is a most important part of the ceremony. In China the bridegroom's family send what they call "cakes of ceremony" to the bride's family--curious little cakes of fat pork, sugar and sesame oil.

But there. I'll stop wandering in foreign lands and come back to our American wedding cakes.

Of course, customs differ slightly in different parts of the country, but the bride who follows all the traditions will have two kinds of cake at her wedding breakfast or supper. At one end of the table she will have a white highly ornamented bride's cake which she cuts herself with a shining silver cake-knife tied with a white satin ribbon. At the other end of the table will be the dark rich fruit-cake--the "groom's cake" or the "wedding cake" which only puts in an appearance and is not eaten at the wedding feast.

The bride's cake is usually the mixture which most cooks know as pound cake -- "a pound of butter, a pound of sugar, a pound of eggs" as old recipes have it. It is usually flavored with almond or rose-water and iced with quantities of ornamental white frosting, the fancier the better. Sometimes the bride's cake is baked in a large round single layer, sometimes in a large heart-shaped pan, and sometimes it is built up in tiers of graduated layers. Of course, it contains those little silver fortune-telling favors that add so much to the fun of the wedding party--a tiny ring, a thimble, a coin, a button, a horseshoe, a wish-bone, and a heart. You can buy these in sets made of silver.

The icing for the cake is a white fluffy boiled mixture and if you make

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it yourself, you can use your pastry-tube to add such decorations as roses, scrolled edges, or the monograms of the bride and groom along the top and sides. Professional caterers often cover the top of the cake with a wreath of candy orange-blossoms and leaves, or a great candy ribbon looped in bows, but such decoration is beyond the home kitchen.

The kind of fine fruit-cake that you make for Christmas is the kind to make for the groom's end of the table--rich and spicy, filled with dried or candied fruit but un-iced. The decoration on the top of this cake may be a wreath of flowers made of candied cherries, plums and apricots with leaves cut from candied citron or angelique. According to tradition, this cake is not cut at the wedding, but is sealed away in a tight tin-box just before the bride and bridegroom leave on their wedding journey. Each of the assembled guests writes a line of best wishes which is sealed in the box with the cake. The box is not open again until the couple celebrate their fifth anniversary. What about the traditional piece of wedding cake to dream on? Well, at large formal weddings you will find a trayful of little monogrammed boxes each containing a tiny square of black fruit cake like the groom's cake. These are for the guests to take home.

So much for the traditions connected with wedding cakes. Now a few pointers about making it which come straight from the foods people at the Bureau of Home Economics. (Maybe you would like a pencil and paper to jot down the Bureau of Home Economics recipe for pound cake which I am about to give you.) Whether you are making pound cake or fruit cake or both for the wedding, the points that the foods people stress are these: first, use the very best ingredients; and, second, give the rich dense cake a slow baking. To aid heat penetration, bake these cakes either in a tube pan or in a more shallow baking pan.

Now, listeners, here is the Bureau of Home Economics recipe for pound cake, with almond or rose-water substituted for the usual mace and grated lemon rind. First, the ingredients: 1 and $\frac{1}{4}$ cups butter..... $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of rose-water or almond extract.....1 and $\frac{1}{2}$ cups sugar.....6 eggs..... $\frac{3}{4}$ cups of flour..... $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of salt.

Now the mixing. Cream the butter until soft, add the flavoring and then the sugar gradually, stirring until the mixture is light and fluffy. Continue creaming and add slowly the well-beaten egg yolks. Fold in the stiffly beaten egg whites. Then add the flour and salt and beat until the batter is smooth. Put the batter in a tube-pan lined with wax paper. Bake in a slow oven (300 to 325 Fahrenheit) for 1 to 1 and $\frac{1}{4}$ hours.
